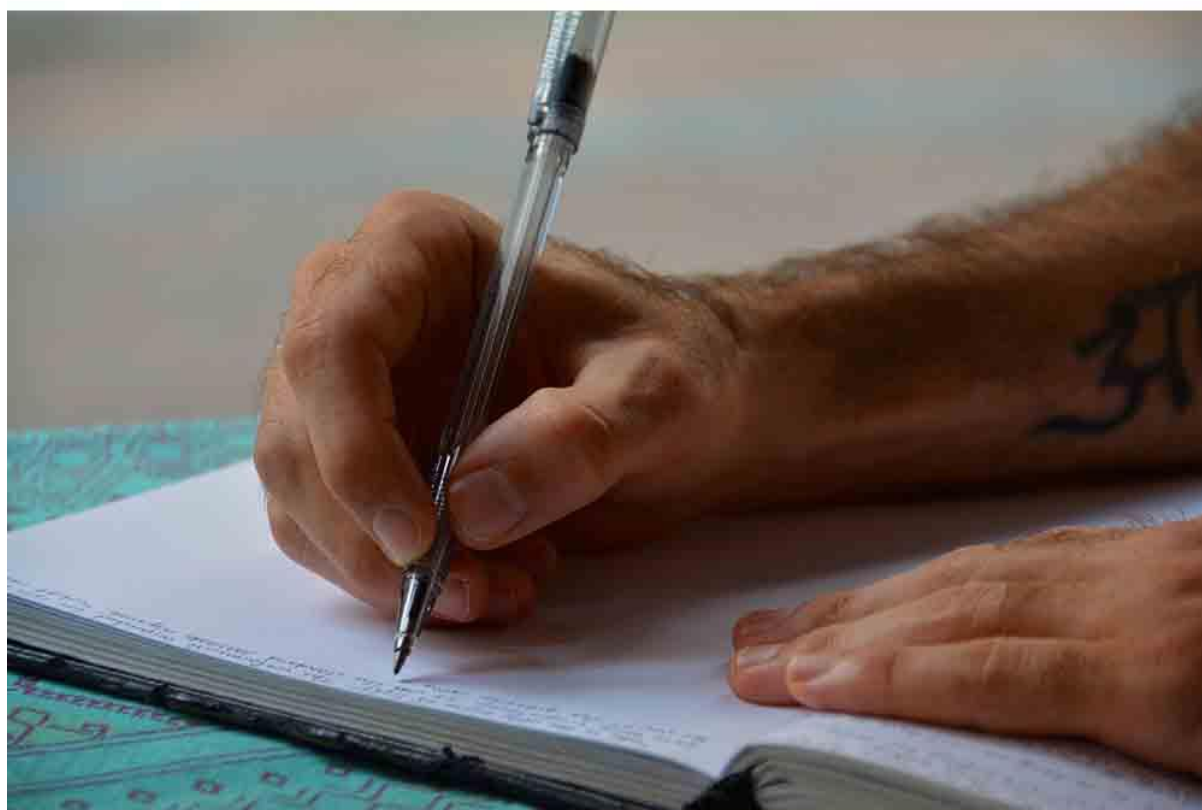


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A Psychological Study of Derangement in Anita Desai's "*Cry the Peacock*"

Abstract

The post- independence fiction does not totally depend upon the idealistic social strains but also focuses on the issues of psyche. The word psyche was borrowed directly from Greek and then translated into English. Carl Jung in his essay "*psychology and literature*" mentions that "All thoughts and expression are derived from the human psyche". There were many Indian novelists includes Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayanan and their subjects were mostly based on social, economic and political concerns and their realities, whereas the other novelists such as Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai focuses on the human predicament. Anita Desai is one of the unique writer in Post Independence period. She is the most creative, powerful and distinguished novelists in Indian writing in English. She has explored new ideas of human psyche and gave new dimension to the psychological fiction. In the novel," *Cry the Peacock*", Desai explores the inner world of the protagonist Maya and proves her anxiety, strange behavior and insecurity. This paper is an effort to portray the psyche of a woman on the verge of insanity and the factors responsible for that.

Keywords: psyche, insanity, derangement, anxiety, psychology, neuroses.

The Indian writing in English has a more than a century with the background. Each stages gives priorities to different perspectives at different times. Mostly the Indian writing fiction is based on the themes of freedom struggle, partition and its effects. But ,new writers came up with new ideas and techniques. Anita Desai is one of the unique writers gave new dimension to a psychological fiction through the usage of vivid description of the characters and her usage of imagery were exemplary.

Anita Desai is distinguished from other writers for her preoccupation with the individual, inner world of sensibility and the chaos inside the mind, whereas other writers like Ruth Praver Jhabvala Kamala Markandaya novels focuses on the contemporary issues and its problems. Anita Desai main concern is the exploration of the inner world, mind and the hidden aspects of human psyche. Desai is the first novelist among the Indian women writers who introduced the word psychology in the Indian novel written in English. Desai highlights an extremely complex nature of life. The real life has an infinite variety. It has many forms which depends upon an individuals.

Desai's notion of life have been greatly influenced by Virginia Woolf who says that “Life is not a series of big lamps symmetrically arranged; Life is a luminous halo ,a semi transparent envelopes surrounding us from beginning of consciousness to the end”.(Woolf 177)

The word “Derangement” is an English term which is related to mental illness and mental disorders. some half million years ago, people assumed that the psychological problems were really caused by the presence of evil spirits. The famous Greek physician Hippocrates thought that the personality was made of four temperaments: sanguine which means being cheerful and active, Melancholic that is being sad ,choleric being angry and aggressive and phlegmatic being calm and passive.

Anita Desai's first novel "*Cry the peacock*" is a psychological novel and it is about the protagonist Maya. She is a young childless woman who is married to Gautama, her father's surrogate. Maya is a typical woman who is sensitive, emotional, introvert and the victim of the inadequacy of human relationship. Maya, who is obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. She is a daughter of a rich advocate in Lucknow, grown up as a single daughter as her mother had been died earlier. Being alone in the family she gets the excessive love and affection from her father. She gets married at the young age and she does not know how to handle a marriage life as she thinks world is like a toy to her as she can turn it with her own convenience.

She dreams of human love and her dreams link her conscious and unconscious levels of mind but Gautama distinguish between fancy and fact. The reason for her obsession in a psyche is the prophecy of an albino astrologer, as he had told that one of the couple would die after the four years of marriage, this becomes troublesome to her unconscious mind. This constant fear makes her to develop her isolation from others. Maya develops a negative approach towards life and find her life as useless and meaningless. Maya's unconscious mind never reconciles with her conscious mind. Maya says,

"All order is gone out of my life, all formality. There is no plan, no peace, nothing to keep me within the pattern of familiar thoughts come, incident occur, then they are scattered and disappear"[

Maya thinks that everything has gone in her life, even there is no any plan in her life. She says even her life is empty with no peace. Many incidents occur in her life but it vanishes. She feels that she is tired of everything past memories, present incidents and future beliefs. She says that she can't bear anymore, she has already disturbed in a mind and she also became very thin which shows that she is not taking her food properly as she is depressed and

oppressed. The over affection of her father makes Maya to be in the deadly and dark shadow. This loneliness makes her to be insane and psychosis patient.

Temperamentally, there is many differences between Maya and Gautama dissimilarities in character, attitude, beliefs, dreams and everything that they are totally contradict to each other which results in unsatisfactory marriage life for both. They are not physically and mentally connected with each other as Gautama is a person who is practical and a man without sentiments and emotions but Maya is totally opposite to him as she is a person who gives more importance to the sentiments and emotionally connected with everyone. The fear of death threatens her again and again and she is forced to think about the death of one either Gautama or herself. But her mind says that she should not lose her life as she loves her life and she wish to live the life to the fullest, so she decides that Gautama should die because he has already detached from life who will not miss his life as she wishes.

Maya's character perceives the psychic truth which is distinctly different from reality that she confronts. Maya develop fears, neuroses, schizophrenia, obsession and gradually she withdraw herself from family and her husband. She herself thinks that she has nobody in her life and her life has gone but still she has desire to live the life. She hears the drumbeat of demons which she thinks it is a call for her death her insanity makes her to feel lonely and the sounds unnerve her. She starts to imagine herself that she is haunted by something and her dark room as her tomb. She sees a lizard, snakes creeping their tongues in and out.

“God! God! I cried ,and sat up in terror. There was no clash and clamour after that .I was aware of a great dead silence in my eyes opened to a vision, A black and evil shadow” [29].

Maya is absolutely affected by albino astrologer's prophecy. She cries to the god as she doesn't have anyone to share her feelings even she has her husband to share he wont

take it as a serious thing. She feels like she is alone now with terror of thoughts and feelings and she realizes that a dead silence affects her and it is a black and evil shadow which shows her insanity

Maya's tragic life is fully formulated in the symbolism of peacocks. she compares her life with peacock. The cries of peacocks in the novel represents her cries of love ,affection and longingness which also represents her invite of death. She compares that how peacock lives in an exotic world like her without resting themselves till the dance of their death. she describes the dances of the peacock how it produced an impact in her mind:

In the shadows I saw peacocks dancing, the thousand

Eyes upon their shimmering feathers gazing steadfastly

Unwinkingly upon the final truth- death. I heard their

Thirst and they gazed at the rain clouds, their passion as...[cry, the peacock,96]

Cry ,the peacock is the greatest attempt of Anita Desai to explain the psychological problems of the isolated and alienated problems. Through this novel, Desai tries to describe the modern scenario's complexities and working of human relationship. According to R.S. Sharma " the novel makes a gripping anxieties caused by marital incompatibility and disharmony and compound by age-old supersitition"[24].Desai's usage of stream of consciousness techniques in her novels and short stories to explore the workings of Indian mind. she is noted for her usage of internal monologue in this novel and the transition between the inner mind and outer action is exemplary. Thus, this novel explores how the mindset of typical Indian women is psychologically affected through the character of Maya. Finally, She murders her husband by pushing him from a terrace and commits suicide.

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